

From: [Coats, Janetta](#)
To: [Little, Bill](#)
Subject: FW: EJ: CES article in Houston Chronicle
Date: Wednesday, February 18, 2015 10:45:51 AM
Attachments: [image001.gif](#)
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Good morning,

In the event previously received, please delete.

Thanks,

News Headline: Abandoned plant's neighbors want city to clean up pollution | ☐

News Date: 02/16/2015

Outlet Full Name: Houston Chronicle

News Text: Feb. 17--Only a chain-link fence and some leafless trees separate Judy Jones' house in south Houston from an abandoned industrial waste facility. They're hardly enough to stop the noxious fumes that waft from the tanks, drums and sludge that remain more than four years after CES Environmental Services closed.

Frustrated by the pace of the cleanup, Jones and her neighbors are urging the city to purchase the Griggs Road property and to pay for the removal of all existing structures. City officials then can decide an appropriate future use for the site, possibly as a park or a housing development, the residents say.

"We're in a danger zone," Jones said Monday. "This needs to be cleaned up."

The push comes six months after the federal Environmental Protection Agency began to clean up the property, an effort that involves removing several hazardous chemicals such as cancer-causing benzene and methyl ethyl ketone, a nose- and throat-irritating solvent.

The agency has set aside \$2.5 million in federal and state money for the effort. But neighbors and environmental groups said the cleanup likely will exceed the budget because crews are encountering contaminants they didn't expect to see at the site.

"This is a public health problem in the middle of the city of Houston, and \$2.5 million isn't enough to fix it," said Tiffany Hogue, policy director for the Texas Organizing Project, which has assisted the site's neighbors. "Now the city has to act."

Hogue and others said city officials should take greater responsibility for the chemical-laden mess because the site is near houses, three schools and a church -- the result of Houston's lack of zoning.

For six years before closing the plant in 2010, CES cleaned truck trailers, recycled oil and packaged waste for transport and disposal. The company's customers included oil refineries and chemical plants along the Houston Ship Channel.

CES shuttered the plant and filed for bankruptcy in 2010 after the city cut off its sewer service amid complaints over odors, explosions and on-the-job deaths. The company's president later pleaded guilty and was sentenced to one year in federal prison for willfully violating worker safety rules and faking documents describing chemical shipments.

Councilman Dwight Boykins, whose district includes the neighborhood and the polluted site, said the city should do more to get it cleaned up. But he stopped short of endorsing city purchase of the property, which is valued at nearly \$2 million.

Instead, Boykins said city officials should apply more pressure on the EPA.

"There are residents in the neighborhood who are suffering, suffering daily," he said. "We need to stop procrastinating."

Councilman Michael Kubosh agreed.

"If this was a fire, the last truck wouldn't leave until the fire was out," he said. "But because this is an odor, a stench, we leave them in the stink."

A city purchase of the site would be difficult at a time when officials project deficits in each of the next four years, driven largely by a spike in the cost of servicing debt, rising payments into three pension funds and a voter-imposed cap on the revenues from property taxes. A projected \$63 million gap must be closed before the new fiscal year begins on July 1. That's significantly more than the annual budget for all city libraries.

But the abandoned plant's neighbors can't wait any longer, said Brian Butler, a spokesman for Air Alliance Houston, an environmental group.

"The buck continues to be passed from the city to the state to the EPA," he said. "We need all of them to come together and get to work. It will take more than what's been done."

Chronicle reporter Mike Morris contributed to this report.

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